

# FACT SHEET



## **Railroad Avenue Groundwater Contamination Site West Des Moines, Iowa**

**October 2001**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing the Railroad Avenue Groundwater Contamination Site to the National Priorities List or NPL. The NPL is a published list of hazardous waste sites in the country that are eligible for extensive, long-term clean-up action under the Superfund Program. The site is being proposed because volatile organic compounds have been detected in several West Des Moines Water Works municipal wells. Five of the contaminated wells have been taken off-line and water from the wells is no longer entering the distribution system. EPA is asking the public for comments on this proposal.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Railroad Avenue Groundwater Contamination Site is a chlorinated solvent groundwater plume. EPA has not identified the source of the contamination. Approximate site boundaries are: on the south by the lakes at the south edge of the Raccoon River Park, on the west by 19<sup>th</sup> Street, on the north by Holiday Park, and on the east by 5<sup>th</sup> Street and the Raccoon River.

Twenty-two municipal water wells that supply water to the West Des Moines residents are in this area. The groundwater plume has impacted wells in the West Des Moines Water Works

### **Public Comment Period**

EPA is requesting comments from the public on whether the Railroad Avenue Groundwater Contamination Site should be included on the NPL. The period runs through November 13, 2001. Written comments (post-marked by November 13, 2001) can be sent to :

**Vickie Angell**  
**Environmental Protection Agency**  
**Office of External Programs**  
**901 N. 5<sup>th</sup> Street**  
**Kansas City, Kansas 66101**  
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municipal system. This system

supplies drinking water to the West Des Moines residents. The West Des Moines Water Works system supplies a population of 46,980 persons. Although several wells have been taken off-line as a result of contamination, the city's municipal water supply remains safe for public use.

## **SITE ACTIVITIES**

EPA has completed a series of groundwater investigations that have defined the eastern extent of the northern groundwater contamination plume, however, the southern plume is yet to be defined.

## **SUPERFUND PROGRAM**

EPA is conducting the site investigations under the Superfund program. Congress established the Superfund program in 1980 in response to growing concerns over human health and environmental risks posed by hazardous waste sites. Superfund locates, investigates and cleans up hazardous waste sites.

After a hazardous waste site is discovered, cleanup can fall under two programs: Removal or Remedial. Removal cleanups are taken at sites that pose threats to people or the environment in the near future. Remedial cleanups address sites that require extensive cleanup.

Under the Superfund program, a site may qualify for placement on the NPL. The NPL is intended primarily to guide EPA in determining which sites warrant further investigation. For a site to be included on the NPL it has to score sufficiently on the Hazard Ranking System (HRS). The HRS evaluates exposure pathways and the potential risk to human health and the environment.

Those sites that score high enough on the HRS are eligible for the NPL. A site that is listed on the NPL is qualified to be financed by Superfund's Trust Fund. If a responsible party is not identified, a site cannot undergo a remedial cleanup unless it is listed on the NPL.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Documents describing EPA's investigations at the site can be found at EPA's office in Kansas City, Kansas and the following location:

West Des Moines Public Library  
4000 George M. Mills Civic Parkway  
West Des Moines, Iowa

If you have questions about this fact sheet or need additional information regarding this site, please contact:

Vickie Angell  
Community Involvement Coordinator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Office of External Programs  
901 North 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
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